

Sysco Food Services of Virginia. His entrepreneurial skills were only outshone by his philanthropic skills as Mr. Showker kindly used his great success in business to give back to his community through his various charitable projects.

More than anything, Zane Showker was an exceptionally kind and generous gentleman who cared greatly for the Shenandoah Valley. As Governor, I was proud to appoint Zane to the JMU Board of Visitors, where he served with distinction. His work at JMU and throughout the Valley had a truly positive effect on the lives of countless Virginians. Like so many others, I will always have fond memories of his warm personality and hospitality at his wonderful home, Breezy Hill.

Today, my thoughts and prayers go out to the Showker family during this difficult time.●

#### RECOGNIZING RAYMON THACKER

● Mr. ALLEN. Mr. President, I am pleased today to recognize Mr. Raymon Thacker for his community service and leadership. Mr. Thacker is in his 70th consecutive year of service as a member of the Scottsville Volunteer Fire Department. Mr. Thacker is a founding member of the Department, and has selflessly given much of his time and hard work to see to it that the Department continues to run smoothly and effectively.

The Scottsville Volunteer Fire Department serves about 15,000 residents within southern Albemarle, Fluvanna, Buckingham, and Nelson Counties. Mr. Thacker has worked tirelessly to make sure everyone in the area remains safe and secure.

The Scottsville region surely appreciates the talents and efforts that Mr. Raymon Thacker has displayed as a member of the Scottsville Volunteer Fire Department. I congratulate him on his community service and wish him well in the future.●

#### TRIBUTE TO MR. JOHN HICKS

● Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Mr. John Hicks, a veteran administrator of the University of Alabama System who, after a quarter-century of service, will retire on August 31, 2004. John has made tremendous contributions to the institution through his dedication to educational excellence, and I am pleased to congratulate him today.

John has served as a member of the University of Alabama management team since 1979, most recently as executive assistant to the chancellor and secretary of the board of trustees of the University of Alabama. Recognized nationally for his accomplishments in higher education administration, John has made countless contributions to the university.

John has been an integral part of the university's efforts to recruit senior leadership, resulting in the selection of

10 campus presidents and four chancellors. Additionally, John's responsibilities at the university include oversight of the activities and meetings of the board of trustees as well as leadership in strategic planning and crisis management issues.

As ambassador of the University of Alabama system in the U.S. and abroad, John has represented the Board and its entities in activities of the Association of Governing Boards of American Colleges and Universities, the American Council on Education, the College and University Personnel Association, the Japan-America Society of Alabama, and the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges. In addition to his responsibilities with the university system, John still finds time to actively participate in the community by serving on the Alabama Shakespeare Festival Theatre Authority and boards of the Alabama School of Math and Science, the Kentucky Festival, and A Women's Place, a shelter for women and children in Tuscaloosa, AL. He is a member of the 2004 class of Leadership Alabama and Christ Episcopal Church.

John received a Bachelor of Science degree in industrial economics/administration and finance from Purdue University and a Master of Arts from the Eastern Michigan University. John and his wife Kirsten Boyd Hicks are the parents of three grown children and have two grandchildren.

John has served the University of Alabama community with dedication and a sincere commitment to make the university a better place. The university will, indeed, miss him, but I am certain he will maintain his presence and leadership within the Tuscaloosa community. Today, I want to congratulate John on the occasion of his retirement and wish him and his family the very best.●

#### JESSICA LONG

● Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, in a few weeks we are going to be cheering on our champion athletes at the Olympics in Athens, Greece. I rise today to tell America the unique and inspiring story of a 12-year-old Marylander and record-breaking swimmer named Jessica Long.

Jessica was born in Russia and adopted with her brother Joshua as an infant. Though Jessica has faced health difficulties and worn prosthetic legs since she was a little girl, she has always been on the move. She began swimming seriously several years ago, pushing off the wall of the pool with her knees, and using her upper body for the majority of her swimming strength. She has since set 11 National and 2 Pan American records for disabled swimmers. Jessica is now going to compete in the 50-, 100-, and 400-meter freestyle events at the Paralympics Games in Athens.

Jessica also finds time to just have fun and be a kid. She has been a cheer-

leader, plays with Barbies and music boxes, and has dreams of being a model or designer. I am confident that Jessica will accomplish her goals, whatever they may be.

Jessica Long is a testament to triumph over adversity. She is strong in both body and spirit. I ask my colleagues to join me in saluting her spirit and wishing her the best of luck at the Athens Paralympics.●

#### COMMEMORATING VALMONT IRRIGATION'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY

● Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, I am pleased and proud to congratulate a leading Nebraska company that this year is celebrating its 50th anniversary as the world's preeminent mechanized irrigation manufacturer. Valmont Industries' development of the center pivot technology has revolutionized agricultural production, not just in the United States, but around the world. At the same time, this technology uses far less water than other traditional means of irrigation such as flood and drip, and preserves water quality by reducing nonpoint source pollution because it lessens the use of pesticides and fertilizers. Valmont's products allow us to grow significantly more crops and produce greater crop revenue, all while protecting our vital natural resources.

I am sure my colleagues are familiar with the center pivot. When you fly across the country and see huge circles in the middle of farmland, those are created by the center pivots manufactured in my home town of McCook and Valley, where they were first developed. In fact, the brand name is popularly known as Valley pivots.

You can also see Valley center pivots and linear and corner machines at work in over 100 countries. All told, the company maintains irrigation manufacturing and distribution facilities in five states and six countries on six continents.

I worked with Valmont officials during my tenure as Governor, and I continue to work with Mogens Bay, chairman and chief executive officer for Valmont; Bob Meaney, senior vice president; and Tom Spears, president of the Irrigation Division; as well as the company's Washington representatives at Bob Lawrence & Associates. In addition, I am also quite familiar with other Valmont products, since it is also the world's foremost manufacturer of engineered poles for electrical transmission, lighting, traffic signs and signals, and wireless communications.

Today, a half century after Bob Daugherty improved and marketed the first center pivot, Valmont has produced an estimated 145,000 center pivots, linear, and corner machines, which successfully irrigate more than 14 million crop acres, and can effectively promote the growth of virtually any crop.

I congratulate Valmont and its dedicated workers for their half century of innovation and initiative as well as for